

Accession Number A/1

Classification

Date: 22 April 1974 4:00-5:00 p.m.

Place: Evanston 1317-A Pitner

Interview with: Carl Davis

Interviewed by: S.F.Patton

Observations: Interview held in private home. Interviewee was rushed because interview was conducted between his sales appointments. Wife, Yvonne was present. The interview was to gain knowledge of Evanston in general, eventually gathering information of various occupations of various occupations. Mr. Davis is president of the N.A.A.C.P.

1. Q. Name

A. Carl

2. Q. What is your occupation

A. Sales-insurance councillor for Prudential Ins. Co.

3. Q. How long with Prudential

A. ten years

4. Q. Do you like it

A. Yes

5. Q. Why

A. I like to help people. The educational experience as a Black. Blacks previously were involved with burial insurance; 4500 policies. Real concepts of insurance never explained before.

6. Q. How did you become employed with this company

A. They, Prudential contacted me. I was a salesman in a Department store. The District Sales man of Prudential contacted me.

7. Q. Why were you contacted

A. They needed and wanted Blacks. I was the first Black in the Chicago area working for Prudential.

8. Q. What department store were you working for

A. H.C. Lytton's Dept. store



9. Q. How long did you work at Lyttons  
A. Seven months

10. Q. Before Lyttons what did you do  
A. worked on garbage truck

11. Q. How long  
A. ten years

12. Q. Where were you born  
A. Evanston

13. Q. What is your birthdate  
A. 5/4/36

14. Q. What school did you attend  
A. Evanston Township

15. Q. Did you like it  
A. yes

16. Q. Was there any racial discrimination at Evanston Township  
A. Yes, some. There was a built-in racial structure in Evanston Township. Councilors would not give any of the Black students encouragements. They always said Black, we were not college material. They never advised me to take college preparatory courses. We didn't take achievement tests for Junior High school

17. Q. You mean there were no tests for Blacks for high school  
A. No, you could take a test for high school after finishing Foster, but there were no tests for elementary to junior high. The year I was in sixth grade, they allowed the first Blacks to enter Junior High.

18. Q. You mean Blacks were not allowed in Junior High  
A. Yes, when I was in sixth grade; they went to either Haven school, north Evanston or Nichols, south Evanston depending on where you lived.

19. Q. Foster was for Black students only correct  
A. Yes

20. Q. Were there any Black teachers that you can remember at Foster  
A. Yes, there was one. Mrs. Boyd

21. Q. All the Blacks went to Foster  
A. 90% of them. My mother went to Central when she came

22. Q. When did your mother arrive in Evanston  
A. I don't know. She's from Abbeyville, South Carolina



23. Q. What about your father, was he born in Evanston

A. No, he was born in Texas. When he came he went to Evanston Township.

24. Q. Did your mother attend Evanston Township

A. Yes

25. Q. Did they indicate to you any response to Evanston Township

A. Yes. The negative/positive situation existed then as when I was in school. The negative still persists; teachers not encouraging. More Blacks went to school during my time and my mother's time.

26 Q. Did Blacks students then suffer, less capable than presently

A. No. My theory is that most of parents understood what education meant. Some of the kids who went on to college were better prepared than Blacks from Chicago. They had a far superior education than most Blacks.

27 Q. Why superior

A. I found study habits and work habits were superior to other Blacks. The material content was important in school. In being racist (the teachers) and their disciplinary attitudes, they were really helping us Blacks. They wouldn't allow us to stay in the halls.

White content of class is racist, history class for instance. In Evanston Township we didn't know differently. We would learn only of George Washington Carver, Frederick Douglass and John Brown.

28 Q. Did most Blacks work for upper class whites

A. Yes. Some came from the South on their own volition and some were brought along with families from Florida or Tennessee for example

29 Q. Was it beneficial for Blacks

A. Yes. In that Black parents knew what was necessary to keep their children from doing menial jobs.

30 Q. Weren't there any negative aspects to this

A. Yes. There is the problem of adopting values; emulating whites. It would circumvent our own culture.

31 Q. Did this exist in the 1920's. The idea of it being negative.

A. Yes. Right. Negative aspects existed as they do now. We have to live together--with Whites. To have change we have to understand, know what Whites are about. Unless I take economics, I won't know about economics. It's all right to feel you don't need white folks. National pride can be detrimental to advancement. Pride has created some negativisms.



32 Q. The idea of knowing your enemy

A. Yes. You can win the battles, but lose the war.

We haven't got to the point just for us to be good. It'll take a long time. There has to be less antagonism towards Whites outwardly. Now the older generation knew how to play the game.

33 Q. Is the previous generation now more vocal

A. Yes. I knew this shoeshine man. He was quiet, a "yes" man. Recently he became more vocal, he told Whites what he thought

34 Q. Is this good for older people

A. It seems to do a lot emotionally. They knew when to say, when not to speak. Here in Evanston, I feel what happens here---happens first. The Black here know how to put things together. Others don't know strategy. We, Blacks can gain more. We could do more. Young people on campus---noise they get--- minute gains vs. major gains by silent strategy.

Strategy for example is a man holding a hat, being polite and getting ham, etc. for his family from the White man. I play lots of games with the White man. It was instrumental in gaining power, the present status of the N.A.A.C.P.

35 Q. Gains for Blacks

A. No, both conservative Whites and Blacks gain

36 Q. You mentioned the N.A.A.C.P

A. Yes. I'm president of the N.A.A.C.P

37 Q. Do you receive criticism of the N.A.A.C.P. as being conservative organization. Not relevant.

A. Yes. All the time. Most people don't know that each branch is autonomous. It can be militant, whatever. It is the national organization cited by critics; it is Roy Wilkins. Detroit without the N.A.A.C.P. would be nothing. Here, the N.A.A.C.P threaten to bring integration of schools suit against the city

38 Q. When

A. 1965

39 Q. Were all schools integrated around that time

A. Yes. We won the contest. We utilized an Affirmative Action Program. We just won a contest with the City Council of Evanston. We got an Ordinance for a Program for Minority Business.

We knew not to say Black Business. The Ordinance included minorities. However, no other minorities were in business, for example no Indians were contractors; they are 1/10th of 1%

Council women argued to have women included. There was 9 weeks of testimony and strategy. We asked if we could add the inclusion of women in a separate sentence at the end of draft. They agreed. It Passed.



Referring to strategy--we worked out with the city manager, white, 30 years old, an agreement. We played the game. "You can have the credit" but we asked the manager to praise the N.A.A.C.P. in a letter which will be kept on file.

40 Q. What about the settlement pattern of Blacks

A. 90% were in Ward 5

41 Q. Were the Blacks always west of the tracks

A. No. My father told me differently. There was Gerrymandering. the 5th Ward grew according to the growth of the Black population

42 Q. When did Gerrymandering begin

A. I don't know. Well.---first change was around fifteen years ago.

